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NRC Issues Draft Supplement to Yucca Mountain Environmental Impact Statement

The Nuclear Regulatory Commission is releasing a draft environmental impact statement supplement on the effects of a permanent repository for spent nuclear fuel and high-level radioactive waste at Yucca Mountain. The NRC will begin taking public comments on the draft Aug. 21 upon publication of a notice in the *Federal Register*. The draft can be found on the [NRC's website](http://www.nrc.gov).

In addition to providing written comments, the public will have opportunities to comment at meetings in September at NRC Headquarters in Rockville, Md., Las Vegas and Nye County, Nev., and via a conference call in early October. NRC staff will discuss the draft and how to comment on it in a conference call in two weeks. More information on these meetings will be provided shortly on the NRC's website and in the *Federal Register*.

The draft supplements environmental impact statements the Department of Energy prepared on the proposed repository. DOE issued the final EIS in 2002, then supplemented it in June 2008. Under the Nuclear Waste Policy Act, DOE is responsible for analyzing and proposing mitigation measures for environmental impacts, as required by the National Environmental Policy Act, and the NRC is to adopt DOE's statement to the extent practicable. The NRC staff recommended adoption of DOE's statements in September 2008, but noted two areas needed supplementation with further analysis: potential impacts on groundwater and from groundwater discharges. DOE deferred to the NRC to prepare the supplement.

The supplement finds that the impacts would be "small." It describes the affected environment with respect to the groundwater flow path from the repository. It models that flow path and movement of radiological and non-radiological contaminants. It evaluates the impacts of contaminants at locations where groundwater is currently being withdrawn, and locations of natural surface discharge along the groundwater flow path, considering the effects from possible changes in climate and water withdrawal, and cumulative impacts from other past, present and reasonably foreseeable future activities in the area.

The NRC staff's analysis shows peak estimated radiological doses along the flow path lower than those estimated by DOE for the maximally exposed individual at a location 11 miles south of the repository site. It also shows the impacts from non-radiological contaminants would be "small." This means the environmental effects are not detectable or are so minor they will not destabilize or noticeably alter any important attribute of affected resources.

After considering the comments received, the staff will revise the supplement, as appropriate, before issuing a final supplement in early 2016.